Royal College.

Belfast December 6th 1843

To the Students of the Theological Seminary
of Princeton. New Jersey

Dear Christian Brethren -

Your kind and very welcome letter, under date of 24th October, came safely to hand, and afforded us, we need scarcely assure you, the very highest gratification. United in the membership of the same pure & Scriptural church, acknowledging with many of you at no distant period a common ancestry, and looking forward, in the good providence of God, to the same high and holy calling, as watchmen together with you upon the walls of our beloved Presbyterian Zion, we hail with delight the cheering announcement of your affectionate and prayerful sympathy, and trust that the friendly relation thus happily established may prove a source of mutual & lasting benefit.

You have well observed, dear brethren, that in these days of defection & rebuke, the friends of Evangelical religion would do well to draw the bonds of brotherly kindness more closely around them. The days in which we live are indeed ominous of change. The time honoured institutions which our ancestors had long regarded as things sacred and inviolable are tottering upon their old foundations, & already have some of them been visited by the rude hand of the spoiler. Coming events, it is said, cast their shadows before; and the elements of discord that have recently been mingling in the various relations of civilized life - commercial, political, and religious - throughout the whole Christian world, appear to be indicative of some great moral revolution, the premonitory movements of which we already contemplate.

True it is, indeed, that to him who is looking for a resting place in that better and brighter land to which you allude so feelingly, further than as they affect the interests of his Master's Kingdom, these great moral changes are as nothing; but viewed in relation to their bearing upon the prospects and progress of the Gospel, they acquire an immense importance, especially to us who profess to have dedicated ourselves to the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ; and hence one reason why it is so desirable that a friendly correspondence should be kept up between us & you - that we may advise with each other upon questions which our distance prevents us from learning otherwise than through the pages of those timeserving journals to which you have alluded in your letter.

We have nothing answering exactly to your Society of Inquiry, but we have what has been familiarly called a Missionary Prayer Meeting, which meets on the Saturday evening in each week, for the purpose of engaging in united prayer, for a blessing upon our present studies & future prospects, as well as for the advancement of missions generally. Considerable interest, we are glad to say, has been evinced among us, especially for the last two sessions, respecting the advancement of Missionary operations; and a sum - large, indeed, in proportion to our means - has been subscribed during that period, in aid of the Missionary Fund of our General Assembly.

Our average number of Students is over two hundred; and your language, with regard to the state of piety in your Seminary, would suit us exactly. We dare not say that there is anything indicative of a high state of religious feeling; Still

We do trust we are not deceiving ourselves in supposing that there is a goodly number of such as are not merely wishing to know their Lord's will, but to do it, and who are asking their way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. Dear brethren, pray for us, as we also have endeavoured to do for you, that we may be "filled with the knowledge of our Master's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding — that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"

A number of us have, for several years past, been in the habit of going out into the streets & lanes of the town, and collecting together as many of the careless and destitute of the population as possible, for the purpose of expounding the Word and engaging in prayer with them. Very good effects appear to have resulted from these meetings, both as regards the teachers and the taught, but especially the former; and if you have not already adopted the practice, we may perhaps be allowed to suggest it for your serious consideration.

You are no doubt aware, through the religious periodicals of the day, of the fields of labour occupied by our missionaries in foreign lands. Since the auspicious union of the two Synods, now constituting the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, six missionaries have been sent out to India, and one to the Seed of Abraham, all of whom had previously been in attendance at this Seminary. Of our Indian missionaries, one, we regret to say, was removed by death shortly after his arrival. The others, including the one to the Jews, are in good health; and the recent accounts from them have been of a cheering character.

We presume, from the observations which you make relative to some of your number having particular districts of the missionary field in view, that you are situated differently from us in these respects, as we cannot tell, until the Church call, who may be selected for missionary labour; but we trust there are many among us who would not shrink from occupying any corner of the Master's vineyard to which in the good providence of God we might be appointed.

The past has been the Bi-centenary year of our Church's existence in this country; and you have probably heard something of the great missionary effort which our General Assembly has been making for the purpose of carrying the Gospel over the length and breadth of the kingdom. A sum considerably over £16,000 has already been contributed, and there is still hope of a considerable augmentation. In your great country, this may appear a small matter; but when you look at the little spot occupied by our "Green Island" upon the map of Europe or the world, and then think of the comparatively small province in that little spot by which this sum has been contributed, it may help to give you more correct ideas upon the subject.

The benighted state of our countrymen in the South & West presses heavily upon us also; and we trust that many of our number will be found willing to give ourselves to the advancement of this good cause. We have found by abundant experience, that the Irish heart can be best opened through the medium of the Irish tongue. The barbarous and ill-starred policy that, in spite of the remonstrances of the sainted Usher, moved the Government of the day to attempt the entire subversion of the ancient language and literature of the country, may be mentioned as the great cause that contributed to keep the Irish heart so long sealed against the entrance of the Gospel. What marvel if our outraged countrymen turned away with a feeling of loathing from a message addressed to them in the language of their oppressors?

Dear brethren, pardon us for saying that, in like manner, until the sense of wrong be wiped out from the hearts of the coloured population in your own land your progress we fear will be small. We rejoice to hear from the future ministers of Christ in that great country to which you belong that they do not approve of slavery in the abstract

But dear friends, pardon us for saying to you that this is not enough. Before another opportunity of bearing our testimony upon this great question presents itself, the hand that now traces these lines to you, as well as the friends who subscribe to them, may be mouldering in the dust. We must bear our testimony for Christ, and we say to you, therefore, in Christ's name — to you who glory in that freedom which is the birthright of every American citizen — to you, the candidates for His ministry who came to undo the heavy burdens, to preach deliverance to the Captive, and to bid the oppressed go free — to you, who by the grace of our Divine Master, may one day exert so mighty an influence upon the tone of public feeling — to you, we say, here is an object worthy of your highest mightiest energies — your most fervid burning eloquence — your deepest & most agonizing prayers. Do you require a stimulus? Let it be the example of the great Clarkson, who, to use the language of one of your own most powerful writers, "looking with an eye of compassion over the face of the earth, felt the misery of our race, and put forth his calm might to wipe off one blot from the marred and stained escutcheon of Human nature — to stri[illegible] off one form of suffering from the Catalogue of human woes. Behold him & his fellow philanthropists for twenty years never wavering from their purpose, until the cry of the oppressed having roused the sensibilities of the nation, the Island Empress rose in her might, and said to this foul traffic in human flesh, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

Our Circumstances differ so widely from yours that we can give you little information with regard to the best method of opposing the progress of Romanism. Owing to the prevalence of party feeling, every plan adopted for disseminating the knowledge of the truth becomes, in a short time, so identified with politics as almost entirely to fail of the end for which it was appointed. Several years ago, a Society similar to that which you describe as lately established in America, and known by the name of the "Reformation Society" did exist here; but it soon became suspected as a political contrivance, and its usefulness was destroyed. Among the ministers of the Gospel connected with the various Protestant denominations there is little direct preaching upon the distinguishing doctrines of Romanism, nor except for the purpose of instructing their own stated hearers, does there seem to be much necessity for it, as Roman Catholics will not avail themselves of their teaching. The instrumentality which appears to have been most acknowledged of God in the Conversion of Romanists, is the reading of the Scriptures in the Native tongue, together with the establishment of Schools in ~~the~~ various parts of the Country, particularly in the South & West, for the education of the young & rising generation. These have already effected a very large amount of good; and when accompanied by the preaching of the Gospel in the Irish language, will, it is hoped, ultimately be acknowledged of God, in disseminating the light of true religion over the length & breadth of this naturally fair, but morally and spiritually degraded land. We have as yet only one Irish preacher — others however, are, in course of preparation — and we hope soon to enter upon the field of Home Missionary labour, in a spirit, and with an agency, proportioned to the greatness of the undertaking. We regret to say that Puseyism is, as you observe rampant in England, though in this Country it is in a great degree confined to the clergy, the attempt to introduce it ~~being~~ not only disapproved of by the laity, but, by a great public measure in one prominent instance, effectually met and resisted. Among the Clergy however ~~it is though~~ it is thought to have made very considerable progress. We hope to be enabled, in some good degree, to respond to your call, in reference to the Church of our fathers. She has long been endeared to many of us, by some of the fondest and holiest associations, but never was she so dear to us, never were our hearts so thoroughly entwined around her, as since the lifting up of her late noble testimony for the headship of her exalted Master. To know that you love & pray for her would give you an additional claim, if any additional claim were wanting, upon our warmest & most affectionate regards.

We thank you for the gratifying intelligence your letter has afforded us, respecting the increase of your Church; and praying that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give you the spirit of understanding & revelation in the knowledge of him" & hoping soon to be favoured with another Communication from you, we remain, dear brethren, Yours in the bonds of the Gospel. —

On behalf of the Committee of Correspondence.

W. Richey. Secy

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Cadmus —

Mr H. A. Brown
Secretary to the Students' Committee of Inquiry on Missions
Theological Seminary of Princeton. New Jersey
United States
America

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